UN

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

SIMPLER SHIPPING MARKS

RECOMMENDATION No.15, THIRD EDITION, *adopted by the*
Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures

Geneva, May 1992

ECE/TRADE/182

PREAMBLE

At its seventh session in February 1978 the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, a subsidiary body of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, included the following project in its programme of work: "Study the standardization and simplification of shipping marks internationally and make recommendations". It had been suggested by the United Kingdom delegation, supported by other delegations and especially by the representatives of France, the German Democratic Republic, Japan and the United States of America that there was an urgent need for concerted international action to harmonize relevant national standards and international recommendations and practices. The new project was referred by the Working Party to its Group of Experts on Data Requirements and Documentation.

Rapporteurs from France and the United Kingdom studied the results of detailed research on shipping marks carried out in several countries and in certain international organizations (identified in paragraph 4 below); they worked in close co-operation with facilitation experts in these countries and the secretariats of the organizations concerned to develop rules for a common standard consignment identifier for adoption by the Working Party. The rapporteurs measures possible in certain modes of transport as well as recommendations issued previously by the Working Party, especially UN/ECE/FAL/Rec. No. 8, **Common Access Reference** (CAR) (February 1978).

The draft Recommendation on **Simpler Shipping Marks** was presented at the tenth session of the Working Party in September 1979 and was adopted at that session. It reads as follows:

RECOMMENDATION adopted at the tenth session in september 1979

The Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures,

Recommends that Governments, international organizations and those engaged in the international movement and documentation of goods should:

(a) adopt a Standard Shipping Mark comprising Abbreviated name, Reference number, Destination , and Package number, as describedhereafter, and note opportunities for further simplification made possible in certain modes of transport and by the use of a Common Access Reference (CAR); [1]

(b) discontinue requirements, especially official requirements, for additional information on packages (e.g. Country of Origin, Import Licence No., Documentary Credit No.); where such information is still required, it should be separated from the Standard Shipping Mark on packages and should not be required as part of the mark when reproduced in documents.

(c) promote the indication on packages of the Gross weight, in kilogrammes, but not of other weights or dimensions;

(d) adopt ISO Standards for cargo handling instructions and United Nations standards for danger warnings; and

(e) adopt the physical marking methods, practices and standards set out in this Recommendation.

At its twenty-fifth session, in March 1987, the Working Party agreed to re-issue the Recommendation without the Annexes which concerned handling marks.

As its thirty-fourth session (September 1991) the Working Party approved revised Recommendation No.8 "Common Access Reference (CAR)" with the change of the title for "Unique Identification Code Methodology" (UNIC). It was also agreed to issue a new (third) edition of Recommendation No. 15 with the appropriate update of Subsection "Special Notes on Common Access Reference (CAR)" (paragraph 20-22) and the addition of the new Sub-section "Bar coding" (paragraph 24).

PARTICIPATION IN THE THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY (September 1991)

At the session representatives attended from:

Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Canada; Czech and Slovak Federal Republic; Denmark; Germany; Finland; France; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Malta;Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Romania; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Turkey; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America. Representatives from Australia; Brazil; Gabon; Japan; Nigeria; Saudi Arabia; South Africa and Senegal participated under Article 11 of the Commission's terms of reference.

The session was attended by representatives of the secretariats of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) as well as by representatives of the following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations:

European Economic Community (EEC), Universal Postal Union (UPU), International Maritime Organization (IMO), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Central Office for International Railway Transport (OCTI), Customs Co-operation Council (CCC), International Air Transport Association (IATA), International Association of Ports and Harbours (IAPH), International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), International Data Exchange Association (I.D.E.A.), International Federation of Freight Forwarders Association (FIATA), International Railway Transport Committee (CIT), International Road Transport Union (IRU), International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Union of Railways (UIC), Korean Committee for Simplification of International Trade Procedures (KOSTPRO) with headquarters located in the Republic of Korea.

[1] The title "Common Access Reference" (CAR) has been subsequently changed into "Unique Identifiction Code Methodology" (UNIC) by the Working Party at its thirty-fourth session in september 1991.

SIMPLER SHIPPING MARKS

I. BACKGROUND

1. The purpose of shipping marks is to identify cargo and help in moving it rapidly, smoothly and safely without delays or confusion to its final destination and to enable the checking of cargo against documents. However, in some instances marks have become so lengthy and detailed that the sides of packages can no longer hold them. It has been said that packages become documents. The result is unnecessary costs, mistakes, confusion and shipment delays, and the purpose of shipping marks is compromised.

2. Shipping marks differ widely between countries and between modes of transport. With the increasing volume of international trade, with the advent of multimodal and combined transport, with the growing need to manage such data for the best use in modern systems and automatic data processing facilities, and with increasing cost-consciousness, it is clear that simple and consistent standards for shipping marks should be established.

3. Some of the benefits of such standardization are:

Reduced cost. Each character eliminated from shipping marks saves time and money in making goods, in typing documents, in transcribing information and in computer usage.

Quicker checking of cargoes and documents - for instance, in cargo tallying and checking of documentary credits. This leads to quicker turn-round of vessels and improved cash flow.

Increased safety by using internationally-recognized symbols for handling instructions and danger warnings.

Trouble-free delivery of goods. The purpose of shipping marks is fulfilled; the delays and other difficulties caused through lengthy, complex marks are avoided.

Examples:

Complicated Shipping Mark	**Simple Shipping Mark**
ASSOCIATED BUYING CORPORATION LIMITED BOMBAY INDIA CONTRACT NO. 1234 IMPORT LICENCE NO.SA-100-77-35790 PACKAGE NO. 1 of 25 DESTINATION: BOMBAY INDIA NET WEIGHT: 401 KGS GROSS WEIGHT: 462 KGS DIMENSIONS: 105CMLx90CMWx62CMH CONTRACTOR: STANDARD TRADING CO LTD TOKYO JAPAN MADE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM	ABC 1234 BOMBAY 1/25

I. BACKGROUND (continued)

4. Following detailed research carried out in several countries, in particular in France, the German Democratic Republic, Japan, Sweden, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, and in co-operation with international organizations such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Cargo Handling Co-ordination Association (ICHCA), it was agreed to put forward a recommendation setting out:

A Standard Shipping Mark for marking on packages and for reproduction in documents.

Information Marks for providing any necessary additional information on packages only.

5. It was recognized that shipping marks are predominantly stipulated by importers. While this Recommendation is particularly directed at them - especially their purchase and documentary credit departments - it applies equally to others responsible for the marking, handling and documentation - for example, Government offices and agencies, international organizations, trading companies, manufacturers, export packers, warehousemen, freight forwarders, groupage and inland clearance depot operators, stevedores, port authorities, carriers by any mode of transport, as well as measuring and tallying institutions.

II. SCOPE

6. This Recommendation aims at establishing a standard consignment identifier in the form of a simplified and standardized shipping mark, for marking on packages and for reproduction in documents. It also aims at establishing rules for the use of information marks, although these are not part to this Recommendation.

III. FIELD OF APPLICATION

7. The Standard Shipping Mark established in this Recommendation should be used for marking on packages moved internationally by all modes of transport, for reproduction in related documents, and as data elements in trade data interchange.

IV. REFERENCES

8. The following documents have been taken into account in the preparation of the present Recommendation:

UN/ECE Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, Recommendation No. 1, "ECE Layout Key for Trade Documents" (now referred to as the United Nations Layout Key for Trade Documents), ME/TTD/73/D1.

UN/ECE Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, Recommendation No.8, " Common Access Reference", TRADE/WP.4/INF..50:TD/B/FAL/INF.50.

International Trade Centre (ITC) (a joint UNCTAD/GATT organ), "Reference Document on International Standardization of Selected Products, Packaging and Labelling", ITC/DFO/INF/78/Rev.2.

International Air Transport Association (IATA), Resolution 606, "Cargo Identification Forms".

International Cargo Handling Co-ordination Association (ICHCA), "Recommendations for the Marking of General Cargo".

V. *STANDARDIZED MARKS*

The Standard Shipping Mark

9. This Recommendation establishes a Standard Shipping Mark and sets out information marks.

10. The Standard Shipping Mark is made up to the following four elements in ***the sequence indicated*** and should be shown both on packages and documents.

		Example
(1)	Initials or Abbreviated Name	ABC
(2)	Reference Number	1234
(3)	Destination	BOMBAY
(4)	Package Number	1/25

Any of the four elements which is considered unnecessary for a shipment may be omitted. Section VI below gives some examples of further simplified marks.

(1) ***Initials or Abbreviated Name of Consignee or Buyer:*** name/address should not be shown in full except for rail transport, where the CIM Convention requires full address on all packages; this is conventional practice also for road transport. Note: exporters and importers could usefully agree on a set of initials/abbreviations to be used for all shipments between them. If an abbreviated name is preferred to initials, the consignees'/buyers' name, as abbreviated in their telex answerback or cable address, could be used.

(2) ***Reference number:*** should be as brief as possible to avoid confusion and mistranscription. Only the most important number of those available, e.g. shipment ***or*** order ***or*** invoice number as agreed between seller and buyer, should be shown. Such information as "Order No." and the year and date accompanying numbers should be avoided.

(3) ***Destination:*** The name of the port or place of ultimate destination of the goods (port of discharge, place of delivery, place of delivery by on-carrier) should always be shown.

In case of transshipment during the transport also the name of the port or place of transshipment can be indicated preceded by VIA, e.g. NEW DELHI VIA BOMBAY.

However, in multimodal/combined transport only the ultimate destination of the goods should be shown; this will permit the transport operator to send the goods by the preferred route (e.g. via Adelaide rather than Sydney) and will avoid interruption of the transport at the place of transshipment (e.g. goods marked CANBERRA VIA SYDNEY could be held for clearance at Sydney).

Example

ABC
1234
CANBERRA
1/25

(4) ***Package Number***. The running and, where known, the total number of packages or pieces should be indicated as, for example, "1/25", "2/25", and so on to "25/25". This is shown on documents as "1/25", meaning "packages number 1 to 25". Such indications as "P/No." need not be given.

V. *STANDARDIZED MARKS (continued)*

Information Marks

11. Information Marks are not essential for the delivery to destination; they are shown on packages (clearly separated from the Standard Shipping Mark), but do not form part of the shipping mark to be reproduced in documents.

12. The ***Gross Weight***, shown in kilogrammes, should be marked whenever it assists safe handling or (as for airfreight) correct stowage. It should be marked below the Standard Shipping Mark but separated from it; example: "462KG". Information such as "GROSS/BRUTTOWEIGHT" need not to be shown.

13. Other details such as ***Country of Origin*** or ***Import Licence No.*** are sometimes required by government regulations or might facilitate Customs clearance. Details can also be included at the buyer's request to facilitate sorting and redistribution of the goods. It is however not advisable to show the sender's name/address on packages if it increases the risk of pilferage. All such details should be well separated from the Standard Shipping Mark and be kept to an absolute minimum. They should be abbreviated as much as possible, for example "IL GG2245517067 2" instead of "IMPORT LICENCE NUMBER. G/G22455-17067-2".

14. It is normally not necessary to show ***Net Weight*** and ***Linear Dimensions*** on packages (although this is done conventionally on certain goods such as chemicals in drums or on very large packages); national and international regulations should, to the extent possible, not make such details mandatory. When required they can be abbreviated as, for example, "N401KG 105x90x62CM".

Special Notes on Standardized Marks

15.1 Shipping marks must not exceed ten lines of 17 characters per line. This is the maximum for documents and computer systems established in accordance with internationally-recommended standards.

15.2 Only characters which can be produced by typewriter and telex equipment or can be transmitted by electronic means should be used for the Standard Shipping Mark and Information Marks. These are the letters A to Z, the numerals 0 to 9, the space character and the following graphic characters: full stop (.), hyphen or minus (-), parenthesis (), oblique stroke or slant (/) and comma (,). Certain other graphic characters may be used as control characters within de UN/ECE trade data interchange syntax rules and should be avoided in shipping marks; they are the following: plus (+), colon (:), apostrophe ('), equal sign (=), question mark (?) and asterisk (*).

15.3 Geometric or other figures (e.g. diamonds, triangles, squares) should not be used for the Standard Shipping Mark or Information Marks.

15.4 Where the Standard Shipping Mark is required in more than one alphabet or language (e.g. Cyrillic, Arabic, Chinese) at least one mark should be shown in the Roman alphabet. The other mark should be shown in brackets beside the first or on another side of the package (marks are shown on two sides of the individual packages of the shipment - see Section VII). Only the mark in the Roman alphabet should be reproduced in documents. (These rules will not apply to Standard Shipping Marks shown on goods moving between countries where the Roman alphabet is not used.)

15.5 Colour coding - such as the marking of green stripes or crosses - should be avoided whenever possible, and no reference in documents to such coding should be required.

VI. SIMPLIFIED MARKING FOR DIFFERENT MODES OF TRANSPORT

16. The Standard Shipping Mark can be simplified further for some modes of transport whereas Cargo Handling Marks - especially danger marks - must be shown in full.

Loose General Cargo in all modes of transport should be fully marked in accordance with Section V.

Groupage Cargo. Even if the groupage cargo makes the greater part of its journey in a container or a TIR trailer, handling at various groupage depots is necessary and individual parts of the shipment should be fully marked in accordance with Section V. If a full container or trailer, consigned by one shipper is broken down during transit for split deliveries, all parts should likewise be fully marked.

Full Loads (i.e. full container loads (FCL), trailers, wagon or airline ULDs containing goods sent from one shipper to one consignee): the Standard Shipping mark can be simplified as follows:

(a) if the load is covered by a single set of documents and if packaging and contents are identical in every way - size, type, grade (for example, 50-Kg bags of rolled oats or refined sugar), the Standard Shipping Mark should not be at all necessary;

(b) if the load is covered by more than one set of documents (e.g. two sets of invoices for accounting purposes) or comprises packages whose contents differ, only items 2 and 4 of the Standard Shipping Mark (Reference No. and Package No.) should be necessary to check goods against documents and for identification of the goods or Customs or consignee.

Example: 1234
1/25

17. In any event, it must be possible to cross-reference packages to a comprehensive packing list for Customs examination and for purposes of sorting and redistribution.

18. It should be noted that containers and trailers containing dangerous goods must bear on the outside the danger labels and other mandatory data such as correct technical name/proper shipping name of the contents. Similar rules apply to radioactive material.

VI. SIMPLIFIED MARKING FOR DIFFERENT MODES OF TRANSPORT (continued)

Air freight, loose or consolidated cargo.

19. IATA Resolution 606 sets out the mandatory and optional content of shipping marks for air freight:

(a) the Standard Shipping Mark. The Air Waybill No., as a unique reference, replaces items 1 and 2 of the Standard Shipping Mark (Abbreviated Name and Reference Number); the three-letter IATA code can be used to shorten item 3 (Destination); item 4 remains unchanged.

Example:
015-12345675
DEL
1/25

(b) for consolidated (groupage) cargo, the House AWB No. can be shown at the end of the marks.

(c) Information Marks. IATA Regulations state that the gross weight may be shown below the shipping mark and the full consignee address must appear on at least one package.

Special Notes on the Unique Identification Code Methodology (UNIC)

20. Implementation by commerce, carriers and Governments of revised Recommendation No. 8 of the UN/ECE Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, "Unique Identification code methodology", could further simplify shipping marks while enhancing the possibilities of using automated procedures including electronic trade data interchange.

21. The Unique Identification Code (UNIC) could be used to replace items 1 and 2 of the Standard Shipping Mark (Abbreviated Name and Reference Number) and link up with ADP systems in one or both countries.

Example:
16/ 128735258/B1928
HELSINKI
1/25

22. Eventually, if a comprehensive ADP system existed for control of goods movements and transmission of information, and was used by the countries and carriers concerned in a particular goods movement, it would be possible to replace the Standard Shipping Mark entirely (except for item 4 - Package Number) with the UNIC.

Example:
16/ 128735258/B1928
1/25

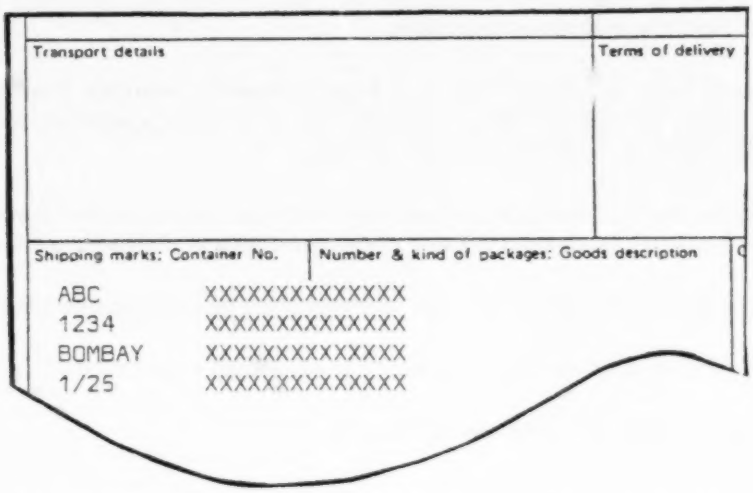
23. An interesting comparison may be made with the ADP methods used by containership operators to control and trace cargoes worldwide by sole use of the container number, e.g. ABCU 2128835 and those used by airlines with the Air Waybill No., e.g. 015-12345675.

24. When bar coding shipping marks the maximum number of characters that can be encoded depends on several factors, primarily: the bar code, printing technique, reading equipment and symbology. For companies or organizations wishing to bar code the Standard Shipping Marks it is important that the appropriate symbology and reading equipment are chosen.

25. The United Nations Layout Key specifies a position for entering shipping marks, under the heading "Marks and Numbers", in the following way:

VII. METHODS OF MARKING

On documents



Only the Standard Shipping Mark should be shown and ***buyers should ensure that documentation instructions (in particular those given in documentary credits) do not call for any additional details to be shown under "Marks and Numbers"*** other than ***the Standard Shipping Mark.*** The "Special notes on standardized marks" under Section V should also be considered in this respect.

On cargo

26. The keywords for cargo marking are: Big, Bold and Brief.

The Standard Shipping Mark

(a) should be marked centrally on ***two sides*** of the package or pallet load; loose cargo by conventional seafreight should be marked on the top also;

(b) should be in characters ***5 cm high,*** but can be varied where necessary in proportion to the size of the package;

(c) should preferably be *stencilled* using black ink (or a colour contrasting with the background) which is water-proof, permanent and resistant to humidity and friction.

Note 1 - If a felt-tip is used, the ink must be water-proof and permanent, as indicated on the barrel of suitable pens. Writing should be large, clear and in capital letters.

Note 2 - Fluorescent colours might be considered. Red should only be used for dangerous cargo. Some Colours might merge with the background under fluorescent, mercury or sodium vapour lighting.

Information Marks - should be well separated from the Standard Shipping Mark and should be shown in smaller characters or in different colour.

VII. METHODS OF MARKING (continued)

Special Notes on Methods of Marking

27. Unpacked items, e.g. ironwork should be marked with a metal tag, securely wired. Tie-on tags can be used for personal effects. Tags and tie-on labels should otherwise be avoided.

Bales should be marked on both sides.

Bags and sacks should be marked on both sides with a marking fluid which impregnates the material. Where contents can sift through a material, such as hessian, marking should be done before filling.

Drums should be marked on the head (top) and size; the size of the characters on the head may be reduced because of the small area available for marking.

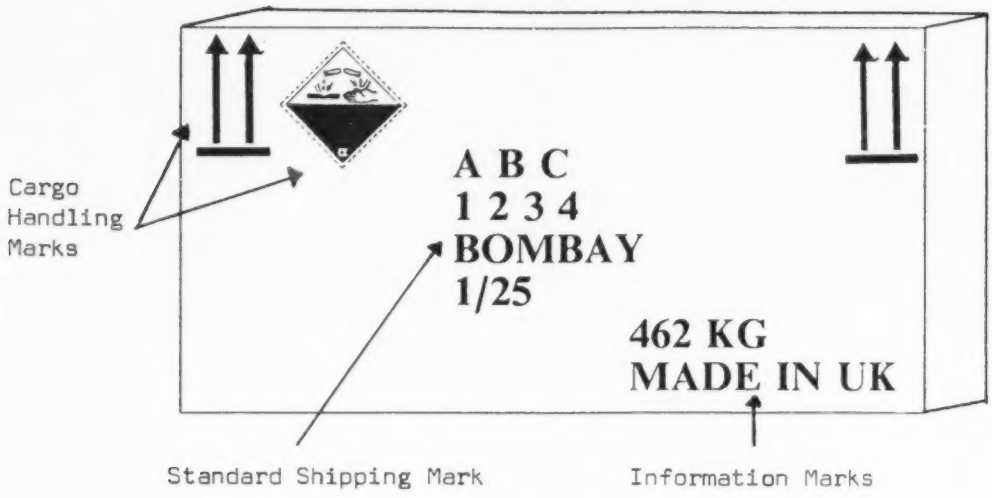
Carboys should be marked with self-adhesive labels on two opposite sides.

Areas which will be covered by straps or bands should not be marked.

Old marks should be completely obliterated.

Annex

Sea Freight



Air Freight